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September 3, 2014

TO: Audit Committee

FROM: John Naimo 
Acting Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **SUNSET REVIEW FOR THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION
FOR PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES**

RECOMMENDATION

The Audit Committee recommend to the Board of Supervisors (Board) to extend the Los Angeles County Commission for Public Social Services' (Commission) sunset review date to November 30, 2017.

BACKGROUND

The Board created the Commission pursuant to Los Angeles County Code Chapter 3.56. The Board approved the most recent sunset review date extension on January 4, 2011.

The Commission advises the Board and the Director of the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS or Department) on matters relating to public social services. In addition, the Commission's duties include:

- Conducting studies and making recommendations to the Board and Director of DPSS on the management and operation of DPSS, to promote efficient and cost effective delivery of departmental services.
- Conducting public hearings to determine public needs, cooperating with organizations and private citizens to improve public social services, and advising the Board and Director of DPSS on issues and recommendations based upon public input.

- Reviewing proposed federal, State, and local legislation and regulations for potential impact on the County, and making recommendations to the Board and Director of DPSS.

The Commission is comprised of 15 members, three appointed by each Supervisor. Commission members should have experience in the management and operation of large private businesses, civic affairs, or public charitable activities. One of the three members nominated by each Supervisor should be either a welfare recipient or a representative of a welfare rights organization.

Commission members receive \$25 per month if they attend at least one meeting during that month. During the period reviewed, from January 2011 to March 2014, all Commission members waived their monthly stipends.

DPSS provides the Commission with necessary staff support, including two full-time DPSS employees. During Fiscal Year 2012-13, the Commission received approximately \$163,000 in staff support and services/supplies.

JUSTIFICATION

From January 2011 to March 2014, the Commission met 33 times with an average meeting attendance of 8.5 (57%) members. The Commission recognizes its low attendance, and is actively working to improve attendance by sending meeting reminders to Commission members and working with various Board offices to fill vacancies. Although the Commission's average attendance was low, the Commission successfully fulfilled its duties.

During this review period, the Commission's accomplishments included:

- Establishing a monthly Ad Hoc Committee on Veterans (Committee) to encourage discussions between DPSS and community partners to create awareness and obtain more knowledge about the challenges that veterans encounter in receiving General Relief (GR) assistance. The Committee recommended that the Board evaluate departments' outreach efforts to increase the number of veterans in the County's workforce.
- Participating in a GR Restructuring Work Group which included DPSS, other County departments, and stakeholders, to review and provide feedback on the GR Program restructuring progress. The GR restructuring plan, which was approved by the Board in 2009, was designed to reduce GR caseloads over time by focusing on services that would help participants transition off of County assistance.

- Providing recommendations to enhance the Department's new veterans' website, which provides information on benefits and services available to assist veterans. DPSS implemented some of the recommended changes, such as adding links to other veterans-related agencies and resources and developing a Frequently Asked Questions section.
- Providing a forum for the Public Counsel Law Center (Public Counsel), a pro bono law firm, to discuss issues identified based on interviews with DPSS clients and observations at 11 DPSS district offices. This forum allowed the Commission, DPSS, and Public Counsel to address concerns such as wait time at offices and adequate communication between district office staff and clients.
- Holding annual awards ceremonies to recognize DPSS employees for their contributions to the public social services sector.

The Commission's objectives for the coming period are to:

- Evaluate homeless services available to veterans, CalWORKs and GR participants, and Transitional Aged Youths, to help strengthen the Department's partnership with community partners to eliminate homelessness and increase stable housing programs.
- Review the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program to assess the adequacy of DPSS' training program for providers, safeguards to prevent potential waste and fraud, and the process for determining provider rates.
- Evaluate how the Commission can assist DPSS to work with outside research agencies to collect and analyze data that DPSS may use when planning and developing departmental programs.
- Continue to conduct studies, meet and confer with the public, review and make recommendations on proposed federal and State legislation, and work with DPSS and the public on restructuring the GR Program.

Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Robert Smythe at (213) 253-0101.

JN:AB:RS:TK

Attachment

c: Sheryl L. Spiller, Director, Department of Public Social Services
Corinne J. Sanchez, Esq., Chairperson, Commission for Public Social Services
LaFrance Toliver, Executive Director, Commission for Public Social Services
Twila P. Kerr, Chief, Commission Services

COMMISSION SUNSET REVIEW
LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
REVIEW COMMENTS

Mission. Does the mission statement agree with the Board of Supervisors' (Board) purpose and expectations?

The stated mission agrees with the Los Angeles County Commission for Public Social Services' (Commission) duties specified in County Code. **CONCUR.**

Section 1. Relevance. Is the mission still relevant and in agreement with the Board's purpose and expectations?

The Commission advises the Board and the Director of the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS or Department) on public social service issues, conducts studies, makes recommendations on the delivery of services, holds public hearings, and reviews and makes recommendations on proposed legislation.

The Commission's mission appears to be **RELEVANT.**

Section 2. Meetings and Attendance. Are required meetings held and is attendance satisfactory?

The Commission meets monthly. From January 2011 to March 2014, the Commission met 33 times with an average meeting attendance of 8.5 (57%) members.

Although the Commission's meeting frequency is **SATISFACTORY**, the Commission's attendance is **UNSATISFACTORY**. The Commission recognizes its low attendance, and is actively working to improve attendance by sending meeting reminders to Commission members and working with various Board offices to fill vacancies. Although the Commission's average attendance was low, the Commission successfully fulfilled its duties.

Sections 3 and 4. Accomplishments and Results. Are listed accomplishments and results significant?

During this review period, the Commission's accomplishments included:

- Establishing a monthly Ad Hoc Committee on Veterans (Committee) to encourage discussions between DPSS and community partners to create awareness and obtain more knowledge about the challenges that veterans encounter in receiving General Relief (GR) assistance. The Committee

recommended that the Board evaluate departments' outreach efforts to increase the number of veterans in the County's workforce.

- Participating in a GR Restructuring Work Group which included DPSS, other County departments, and stakeholders, to review and provide feedback on the GR Program restructuring progress. The GR restructuring plan, which was approved by the Board in 2009, was designed to reduce GR caseloads over time by focusing on services that would help participants transition off of County assistance.
- Providing recommendations to enhance the Department's new veterans' website, which provides information on benefits and services available to assist veterans. DPSS implemented some of the recommended changes, such as adding links to other veterans-related agencies and resources and developing a Frequently Asked Questions section.
- Providing a forum for the Public Counsel Law Center (Public Counsel), a pro bono law firm, to discuss issues identified based on interviews with DPSS clients and observations at 11 DPSS district offices. This forum allowed the Commission, DPSS, and Public Counsel to address concerns such as wait time at offices and adequate communication between district office staff and clients.
- Holding annual awards ceremonies to recognize DPSS employees for their contributions to the public social services sector.

The Commission's accomplishments and results are **SIGNIFICANT**.

Section 5. Objectives. Are the objectives compatible with the mission and goals and relevant within the current County environment?

The Commission's objectives for the coming period are to:

- Evaluate homeless services available to veterans, CalWORKs and GR participants, and Transitional Aged Youths, to help strengthen the Department's partnership with community partners to eliminate homelessness and increase stable housing programs.
- Review the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program to assess the adequacy of DPSS' training program for providers, safeguards to prevent potential waste and fraud, and the process for determining provider rates.
- Evaluate how the Commission can assist DPSS to work with outside research agencies to collect and analyze data that DPSS may use when planning and developing departmental programs.

- Continue to conduct studies, meet and confer with the public, review and make recommendations on proposed federal and State legislation, and work with DPSS and the public on restructuring the GR Program.

The Commission's future objectives appear **RELEVANT**.

Section 6. Resources. Are the resources utilized by the entity in support of the entity's activities warranted in terms of the accomplishments and results?

DPSS provides the Commission with necessary staff support, including two full-time DPSS employees. During Fiscal Year 2012-13, the Commission received approximately \$163,000 in staff support and services/supplies.

The Commission's expenses appear to be **WARRANTED**.

Section 7. Recommendation.

EXTEND THE SUNSET REVIEW DATE FOR THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES TO NOVEMBER 30, 2017.